

ELEMENTS

ELEMENTS

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Featured element:

FIRE



ELEMENTS

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The Minnesota Jung Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the exploration of the individual human psyche and its interconnectedness with community and the world. To facilitate this purpose, we are committed to the study, discussion, and practical application of the theories of the Swiss analytical psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, and other pioneering students of soul and spirit. Through theoretical and experiential inquiry, we seek to honor and enhance human awareness, conscious that the vitality of a community is based upon the living authenticity of its members.

Upcoming Events 2011

April 29

Joseph Cambray lecture, "Moments of Complexity in Jungian Analysis"

April 30

Joseph Cambray workshop, "Synchronicity in an Interconnected Universe: Renewing and Extending Jung's Vision"

May 13

David Miller, "Jung's Warning about Faith: The Psychological Danger of Belief"

Details on www.minnesotajung.org

Calendar overview of upcoming "Elements" key dates:

Featured Element: Water

Submissions Due Date: June 1, 2011

Publication Date: July 1, 2011

Featured Element: Air

Submissions Due Date: September 1, 2011

Publication Date: October 1, 2011

Featured Element: Earth

Submissions Due Date: December 1, 2011

Publication Date: January 1, 2012

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Why the Portal to the Sacred is So Often Closed: A Grail Perspective

Ken Schmitz

Editor's Note: This essay was awarded third prize in the essay contest sponsored by the C.G. Jung Society of St. Louis. The Topic of the Essay Contest was "Portal To the Sacred."

What ails us? It is a curious and disturbing phenomenon that our culture founded on deeply held spiritual principles has often been a destroyer of relationships, of the environment, of brave soldiers, and of the dreams of innocent people through greed. What ails us? The Grail mythology gives us an incisive look into the contradictory nature of our collective psyche.

The Grail is the symbol of the highest spiritual fulfillment in the Western world. According to the mythology, this feminine vessel transmits an unending supply of spiritual sustenance, vitality, and guidance for life's travelers. The Grail is more than an object. Seen symbolically the Grail is a numinous experience that is available to all people who know how to find it. To experience in our bones our deep connection to the Divine and to all life is the Grail experience. When we are experiencing this tremendous mystery, the portal to the sacred is open—we are in its flow.

Yet in the history of the Western culture we see endless examples of our ability to give a lovely voice to the highest Judeo-Christian values and ethics, but a limited ability to bring these ideals into concrete action. Sunday morning we proclaim "love thy neighbor as thyself" while for the rest of the week many of our actions reveal the unconscious belief "forget thy neighbor so as to advance thyself." We play out this power-over-others strategy in our workplace, in our neighborhood, in our family, on our highways, and in our political discourse. The portal to the sacred nourishment of the Grail experience is often shut. Additionally, the current mutual animosity

between the Muslim and the Christian worlds is the most recent chapter in our inability to translate two beautiful peace-loving religions into practice. As a culture we seem to be spiritually impotent. The myth of Parzival and his search for the Grail gives a diagnosis of this closed-portal problem, but more important, it shows a roadmap for reopening this portal of sacred energy necessary to heal the split between our ideals and our behavior. Although written more than 800 years ago by Wolfram von Eschenbach, the Parzival myth penetrates to the core of this problem and suggests its remedy.

As Jung taught, an individual's dream gives a current assessment of the dreamer's relationship to the Self, confronts the dreamer with startling force when off this path, and shows the way for re-connection and authentic soul life. So too, myths serve a similar function for a culture. In this essay we will look at the Parzival myth as a dream of our culture. The story of Parzival today cries out for ears that will hear its admonitions.

"When the King is wounded, the kingdom suffers. People live in sorrow. The land is barren. Toil and emptiness abound, i.e., the portal to the sacred is blocked."

All of the Grail myths address the problem of the Waste Land. In the myth, the Waste Land is formed because the Grail King is wounded. When the King is wounded, the kingdom suffers. People live in sorrow. The land is barren. Toil and emptiness abound, i.e., the portal to the sacred is blocked. The modern day Waste Land represents a state of being where lives are filled with anxiety, conflict, and indecisiveness. People in the Waste Land hide behind addictive behaviors, which leave them even more empty. In the Waste Land relationships are marked with conflicts at the individual and societal level. Additionally,



people have no idea as to the cause of the conflict, nor how to repair the rift. To experience the Waste Land is to experience a wound of the soul. According to our myth, we in the Western culture are like the Grail King—suffering a wound nearly impossible to bear, yet we cannot free ourselves from its oppression.

Let us look at the Parzival legend to see how the Grail King was wounded, thus creating the Waste Land. Wolfram names the Grail King “Amfortas,” which translates “without strength” or “the feeble one.” Now the Grail King is the representative of the spiritual principle of the Western culture; he is the guardian of the Grail. It is a bad omen when the representative of the spiritual principle of the West is named the feeble one — without strength. By naming the Grail King Amfortas, Wolfram is attempting to address the spiritual ineptness of the Judeo-Christian culture then and now.

How Amfortas becomes wounded is central to the tale. One day when Amfortas was a young man, he rode out of the Grail Castle under the banner entitled “Amor.” Love is the spiritual ideal that Amfortas proclaims. As he rides along, out of the forest appears a Pagan Knight from the Middle East. Seeing this Pagan Knight as a foreign invader, Amfortas lowers his spear and charges him. (Notice how the ideal of Love has quickly disappeared.) The Pagan Knight defending himself also lowers his spear. Both men charge the other, and a gigantic crash occurs as the Grail King and the Pagan Knight meet. The Grail King’s spear strikes the Pagan Knight and kills him. The Pagan Knight’s spear lodges in the Grail King’s groin and castrates him. This horrible moment in our story results in one dead Pagan Knight and one castrated Grail King.

Amfortas revives enough to hobble back to the Grail Castle. As his attendants minister to him, they discover that the head of the Pagan Knight’s spear has lodged in the King’s groin. When they remove it, they find that the word “grail” is engraved on the head of the Pagan Knight’s spear. That evening in the Grail Castle, a message appears on the Grail stating that the King will be healed when a knight with a noble heart (of compassion) comes to the Castle and, upon seeing the King’s suffering, asks the correct question. Until then Amfortas suffers his wound and his people live in the Waste Land waiting for release.

How are we to understand the Grail King’s wound? It is a troubling sign when the representative and guardian of the spiritual principle of the Western culture is castrated. No wonder we experience our culture as spiritually impotent. Our social and religious institutions often fail to mediate the lofty spiritual principles they espouse. The Parzival myth shows us a cold, hard fact: we have

inherited a set of spiritual principles and practices that have left us spiritually feeble. The portal to the sacred is regularly blocked. This is the bad news. The good news is that the myth of Parzival shows us how to heal this wound and by that heal the Waste Land — reopening the portal to the sacred.

“Joseph Campbell comments on the fact that the word “grail” is engraved on the head of the Pagan Knight’s spear. He states that this detail of the story signifies that Nature, as represented by the Pagan Knight, aspires to its own spiritual fulfillment.”

So far we have discovered that the Grail King is wounded because he attacked and killed the Pagan Knight. Amfortas viewed the Pagan Knight, a Muslim from the Holy Land, as an invading foreigner. Amfortas dehumanized this knight by failing to wonder whether he had a wife or children or whether others loved and cherished him. The words pagan, heathen, or infidel are used to label people who were not educated in our way nor believe as we do. The title pagan knight reveals a bias based on an egocentric perspective. Within the individual and collective psyche, the Pagan Knight represents the dark, unknown energies that live there. The Pagan Knight stands for the nonrational, the instinctual, the emotional, and the intuitive wisdom of the body. He is the neglected and repressed feminine energies of our patriarchal culture. The Pagan Knight is a symbol of those parts of our natural self, both individually and collectively, that we have judged as wrong and unacceptable. The religious tradition in the West teaches its followers to deny, resist, and repress these natural energies of the psyche, that is, figuratively to kill the Pagan Knight. By doing so, our myth tells us, we leave ourselves and our communities spiritually impotent. The life-giving energies of our religious heritage are blocked, not accessible to us in a meaningful way. Thus, the Waste Land continues to be perpetuated today. Joseph Campbell comments on the fact that the word “grail” is engraved on the head of the Pagan Knight’s spear. He states that this detail of the story signifies that Nature, as represented by the Pagan Knight, aspires to its own spiritual fulfillment. In contrast the Judeo-Christian thought teaches its followers to subdue nature and to transcend the body and its natural instincts. By that we are shamed into repressing our pagan knight self. Nature, matter, and the body are seen as contrary to Spirit. Instead of teaching that the spiritual life is the completion and the fulfillment of the natural life, we are



the wounded Grail King, fishing on a lake. Amfortas now an old man, who has suffered his wound for many years, invites Parzival to the Grail Castle for dinner. For years the members of the Grail Castle have anticipated this day when a knight would come to the Castle and upon seeing the suffering King would ask the correct question that would free the King of his suffering. A magnificent ceremony takes place. The Grail itself is processed into the Grail Hall by twenty-four maidens. The Grail provides the sustenance for all there. After the meal the moment of healing arrives. Genuine compassion moves Parzival to ask the Grail King, 'What ails you?' Unfortunately, his mentor taught Parzival that proper knights do not ask unnecessary questions. So out of social convention and appropriateness, Parzival suppresses his compassionate instinct and refuses to ask the healing question that would free the Grail King from his suffering and heal the Waste Land. Just as Parzival was uninitiated when he first arrived at Arthur's Court, so too we see that he is still spiritually uninitiated. Therefore, he fails to heal the wounded King to the complete dismay of all the inhabitants of the Grail Castle.

taught to split ourselves. This idea that the spiritual life is a fulfillment and completion of the natural life is core to Jung's teaching on individuation.

The myth of Parzival provides a roadmap for every man and woman to heal the wounded Grail King within themselves and by that transform their society. Parzival, the hero of our myth, is born of a warrior father who is killed on a battlefield in the Middle East weeks before Parzival's birth. Parzival's mother is a gentle and an over protective woman, who wishes to dissuade her son from the world of knighthood and battlefields. However, when Parzival is an adolescent he meets several knights and, despite his mother's efforts, sets out to join Arthur's Court. As Parzival begins his adult life he does not know that his father sired a son by a Muslim woman. Parzival is unaware that somewhere on this planet he has a Muslim brother, who will become a "pagan knight." Coming to know and accept this fact will be essential for Parzival's experience of the Grail.

One day Parzival arrives at Arthur's Court only to discover that as an uninitiated young man, he is ill-equipped to become a knight of the Round Table. His journey then takes him to an old knight who trains and mentors Parzival in the skills and ethics of knighthood. Parzival becomes proficient in this field. With these new skills in hand, Parzival defends a queen's castle, marries her, and has two sons. Now that he has established himself in the world as a skilled warrior, husband, and father, his ego-container is strong enough to be penetrated by the reality of the Self. One day Parzival comes upon Amfortas,

This failed opportunity at the Grail Castle sends Parzival on a long journey of suffering and disorientation. A female messenger is sent from the Grail Castle to inform Parzival of his failure and to block him from becoming a knight in Arthur's Court — an honor that would have satisfied Parzival's ego, but was not his soul's destiny. The female Grail Messenger confronts Parzival with stinging words, just as the Self often presents an individual with a confrontational dream when he or she has missed the mark in life. Parzival's failure was not an evil act, but unconsciousness at life's critical moment is his problem. Because of this fierce defeat of his ego, Parzival resolves to return to the Grail Castle to correct his mistake. Many years pass as Parzival wanders the land searching for the Grail Castle. During this time Parzival sheds many of the trappings of his personal and collective formation, not the least of which is his image of God. Parzival suffers the dark night of the soul. Finally he is broken and surrenders to the Divine Will in his life. Because of this acceptance he meets a hermit who for the first time in years gives Parzival comfort and spiritual guidance. As welcome and healing as this time with the hermit is, it does not get Parzival back to the Grail Castle.

The turning point of the tale occurs one day when Parzival rides his horse along the forest, out of which appears a Pagan Knight from the Middle East. Both men lower their swords and charge each other. Parzival is re-enacting the event that wounded the Grail King so many years before. A fierce battle takes place — the fiercest of Parzival's life. Parzival is so skilled that he has

never been defeated on the battlefield. However, at this critical moment Parzival's sword breaks, just as he broke that day in the Grail Castle. Parzival fears defeat and death. Remarkably, the Pagan Knight says, "I cannot kill an unarmed man. Besides, if your sword had not broken, I fear you would have defeated me." The Pagan Knight invites Parzival to sit with him and rest. Parzival gladly accepts his invitation. The two men begin to talk. The Pagan Knight states that he has come to Europe looking for his father who is from a province in France. Parzival exclaims, "that is my land!" Then both men discover that they have the same father! The pagan, whom Parzival was fighting, is his brother Feirefiz. Feirefiz wants to see Parzival's face. Therefore, he throws his sword into the forest and both men remove their helmets. Parzival sees his black and white brother. They kiss and embrace. Listen to Wolfram's description of this battle:

The heathen swung his sword aloft, and many of his blows were so dealt that Parzival sank to his knees. One may say that "they" were fighting this way if one wants to speak of them as two, but they are indeed one, for "my brother and I," that is one flesh, just as is a good man and a good wife.¹

Here is how Wolfram describes their moment of recognition:

Then neither of them lost any time, each immediately removed his helmet and coif of mail from his head. Parzival found a precious find and the dearest one he ever found. The heathen was recognized at once, for he had the markings of the magpie. With kisses Feirefiz and Parzival concluded their enmity, and friendship beseemed them both better than heart's hatred against one another. Faith and love rendered that battle decision.²

Parzival displays the central act necessary to transform the Waste Land when he recognizes the Pagan Knight as his brother, embraces him, and kisses him. The symbolic implications of this moment within the psyche of every man and woman are profound. Jung consistently spoke of the necessity of integrating our neglected, shadow self. He especially taught the importance of this inner reconciliation for anyone who wants to do good in the world, when he stated:

Such a man (person) knows that whatever is wrong in the world is in himself, and if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day. These problems are mostly so difficult because they are poisoned by mutual projections. How can anyone see straight when he does not even see himself and the darkness that he

unconsciously carries within him in all his dealings?³

After his reunion with his brother, Parzival takes Feirefiz to Arthur's Court that had assembled nearby for a wedding. Just as the ceremony commences, the female messenger from the Grail Castle arrives. This time, instead of harsh words for Parzival, she announces that a message has appeared on the Grail saying that Parzival is to return to the Grail Castle where he will ask the question that will heal the Grail King. Additionally, she announces that Parzival and his wife have been named the King and Queen of the Grail Castle. Parzival is overcome with tears of joy at this news. After so many years of searching for the Grail Castle, the opportunity now comes to him as grace. Finally the Grail Messenger tells him that he may invite one companion for the healing of the Grail King. Naturally, Parzival chooses Feirefiz to be his companion for the sacred moment of healing. This choice stuns Arthur's Court. Many a baptized person longed to be shown the Grail Castle, but Parzival chooses a pagan, a Muslim, to be his companion.

"Parzival displays the central act necessary to transform the Waste Land when he recognizes the Pagan Knight as his brother, embraces him, and kisses him. The symbolic implications of this moment within the psyche of every man and woman are profound."

The Grail Messenger leads Parzival and Feirefiz to the Grail Castle. There they see Amfortas who has suffered severely since the day of Parzival's first visit and failed opportunity. This time Parzival greets Amfortas, asks where the Grail is kept, turns toward it and genuflects three times. Then with his "pagan" brother at his side and with a heart of immense compassion, Parzival addresses Amfortas with the question, "What ails you?" Immediately Amfortas' skin becomes radiant, his long period of suffering ends, and the members of the Grail Castle rejoice as the Waste Land is healed.

Our myth ends with Parzival and his wife Condwiramurs presiding over the Grail Ceremony. Previously, only men held this post. Now Parzival and Condwiramurs, whose name translates 'conduit of love,' together share this creative and life-giving role. For the first time in any of the Grail myths, the masculine and the feminine rule together. This is the direction that the collective energy is attempting to move today — to a new paradigm where the masculine and feminine energies co-create. This new

androgynous principle could not have manifested until Parzival first made his union with his unknown, shadow brother. Wolfram gives us a clue to the secret of healing the Waste Land in our life and times by naming the hero of the tale Parzival, which he translates 'one who pierces the valley', 'Parzi-val.' A parzival is one who is able consciously to hold the paradoxical nature of his or her psyche, allowing these seemingly contradictory energies to transform the personality and heal the terrible split that plagues our individual and collective psyches.

The mistaken way of life is to identify with only one side of our nature. If we identify with our light side and repress all our qualities that do not fit into that definition, we become agents for division in our world. For it is a psychological truth that we cannot love and accept in another that which we have rejected and denied in our self. On the other hand, if we identify ourselves with the darker and more destructive parts of our nature and repress the balancing and transforming values of our Judeo-Christian heritage, then we live lives based on greed, self-centeredness, and hedonism. The middle way is to engage in the difficult work of coming to know and embrace in ourselves our creative and destructive energies and allow a new transformation of our hearts to manifest — just as the Grail Messenger appeared to lead Parzival back to the Grail Castle only after he embraced his pagan knight brother.

To become a parzival we must learn within our hearts to hold our Christian with our heathen self, our loving self with our selfish self, our patriotic self with our terrorist self, and all the other paradoxical combinations within us. For Jung has taught us:

By bearing the opposites we can expose ourselves to life in our humanity... We have to realize the evil is in us; we have to risk life to get into life, then it takes on color, otherwise we might as well read a book....⁴ The opus consists of three parts: insight, endurance and action.....It is conflicts of duty that make endurance and action so difficult. The one must exist and so must the other. There can be no resolution, only patient endurance of the opposites, which ultimately spring from your own nature. You yourself are a conflict that rages in and against itself in order to melt its incompatible substances, the male and the female, in the fire of suffering and thus create that fixed and unalterable form which is the goal of life....We are crucified between the opposites and delivered up to the torture until the reconciling third takes shape.⁵

This "reconciling third" is the transcendent function of the psyche. We experience this numinous reality when we have the consciousness and courage to hold the

tension of the opposites until grace transforms us. The experience of embodying the transcendent is the Grail experience. For this to occur we need our spiritual ideals to be grounded fully in our instinctual nature (pagan knight self). The spirit needs the body as much as the body needs the spirit. When we have the fierceness to undertake this journey into ourselves, we will be doing our part to heal the wounded Grail King within and to heal the Waste Land of our culture. By that, we will reopen the portal to the sacred. For with our lives we would have answered the Grail question, 'What ails us?' ■

Endnotes

¹ Wolfram von Eschenbach, Parzival, translated by Mustard and Passage. Page 386.

² Wolfram von Eschenbach. Page 390.

³ C. G. Jung, "Psychology and Religion," CW11, par 140.

⁴ The Secret of the Golden Flower, translated by Richard Wilhelm. Page 126.

⁵ C.G. Jung, Emma Jung, Toni Wolf (San Francisco: The Analytic Club of San Francisco, Inc., 1982). Pages 111-112.

The Female Icarus

Mary Onstad

The familiar Greek myth of Icarus is frequently interpreted as a cautionary tale for overarching ambition.

As a refresher, here is a brief summary of the myth: Daedalus was a famous inventor from Athens who designed the labyrinth in Crete for King Minos. He and his son, Icarus, ended up in exile in the labyrinth for fear they would divulge the secrets to the maze. They were blocked by the land and water, but Daedalus realized the sky was open. He channeled his creative energy into defying the laws of nature. He created a pair of wings from feathers, twine, and wax to replicate those of a bird. As he fit the wings onto Icarus' shoulders he instructed him to fly a middle course to avoid the water and the sun. In the excitement of flying the boy flew too close to the sun causing the wax on his wings to melt. Icarus then plummeted to his death in the dark waters of what later became known as the Icarian Sea.

In contemporary Western culture, this myth is symbolic of what occurs when someone uses his creativity and drive to go after fame, money, or power, and then self-destructs from his own sense of grandiosity and immortality. Think of Bernard Madoff, Charlie Sheen, Tiger Woods, and countless other examples in popular culture.

These are classic "fall from grace" sort of tales—but what



is interesting is that at mid-life people may go through what Jung called "The Night Sea Journey." We can think of Icarus flying high in Hollywood or Wall Street—having it all and then the fall. Icarus falls into the sea and "dies," in the myth. But Jungians look at this as a death to a part of one's being. The Night Sea Journey is the case here—the quest for self.

But most tales of Icarus have a male as the central character. The female may be the innocent victim of such a male, or may "rescue" him from his own self-destructiveness, but rarely is she the centerpiece of the story.

But I believe there are many female "Icaruses" who are crashing and burning in their quest for self. Think Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, Amy Winehouse. Even though none of these women are in mid-life, they have been in the public eye since a very young age and they seem to be struggling with their identity as if it were mid-life. However, these women seem to incite more disgust than concern, probably because they are playing a role culturally designed for men.

Here is one glaring example: I recently watched several TV shows about Charlie Sheen's spiral from respected actor to out-of-control addict. What was interesting is that many of his fellow actors and even a highly respected TV host were dismissive of his antics as "Charlie being Charlie". Drew Pinsky, a TV psychologist and addiction medicine specialist, wasn't dismissive, but he was very concerned about Charlie's health and well-being and said he should be in a locked treatment facility. Even

a random woman "on the street" interviewed by a TV host said Charlie needed help and the children needed to be protected. Basically, compassion all around.

Contrast this with the reaction to actress Lindsay Lohan's recent appearance in court. The media focused almost solely on her dress—a white, very tight, short dress. How dare she parade around as a sexual goddess, when she should show remorse and act like Hester Prynne, the branded woman in "The Scarlet Letter"? But is she not the female Icarus, a highly talented actress who in search of self, became addicted to drugs and booze, and shoplifted a necklace she could easily afford? And she was doing the right thing by going to court to face her punishment. It seems women like Lindsay, and other women who fly too high and drop in the sea, are "fallen women" in a total other sense of the word, and are seen somehow more worthy of scorn than compassion.

Even though our society has supposedly moved beyond sexual stereotypes, the fact that stories about women who have reached too far and fallen are less popular, and even when they are told, are less likely to elicit compassion or understanding.

Maybe the myth of Icarus itself contains the answer. Here is a brief summary of "Part 2" of the myth: Despite the fate of Icarus, Daedalus' sister sent her son, Perdix, to apprentice with Daedalus. Perdix was only twelve but he was very clever and inventive. He made the first saw out of iron and death. Daedalus envied the boy's skill and hurled him headlong from the temple of Minerva. Daedalus lies about his murder, saying the boy fell. The protectress goddess Minerva managed to stay the boy in the air and give him wings. She changed Perdix into a partridge. The bird keeps low to the ground, fearing high places in remembrance of his uncle. Minerva's action reflects the natural instinct of the female to protect and nurture: The Great Mother.

Maybe that is the central problem that our society has with the female Icarus. The only role that the female has in this myth is protection and compassion. She is the "Great Mother" who protects her man/child from flying too close to the sun. Or if he does, and falls into the sea, she is there to nurture and support her man while he recovers from addiction or failure and finds his true self. There are countless stories of the "stand by your man" woman, who supports her mate during and after a bout with addiction, career failure, or other major fall from grace. Think June Carter Cash and Johnny Cash, Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban, Hillary and Bill Clinton, Kathy Lee and Frank Gifford, just to name a few. But it's hard to think of one example of the male playing that role with a woman. ■

The Journey of the Hero Archetype

Shawn Nygaard

The Hero archetype has a long history, stretching back to classical Greek culture in the mythic stories and images of Odysseus, Hercules, Theseus, and Perseus. Joseph Campbell defines the Hero as “someone who has found or achieved or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience.” It was Odysseus who ingeniously led his troops into the city of Troy from inside the Trojan Horse; it was Hercules who accomplished the ever-more-challenging 12 Labors; it was Theseus who killed the dreaded Minotaur inside its labyrinth; and it was Perseus who retrieved the head of the terrible Gorgon Medusa at the risk of turning to stone. James Hillman notes that, “The Hero is the one who performs inspired deeds for the glory of the city and its gods.” Inspiration, achievement, glory, strength, perseverance—these are all typical traits of the Hero.

The Heroic Ego

The classical Hero is related to survival in the physical world, and thus the Hero’s physique was typically strong and muscular, associated with physical strength. To go a little deeper into the symbolic meaning, it is about a sense of identity achieved through strength, an identity based on achievement. Who am I, and what am I capable of? After all, we can identify these classical heroes by their names. This link to the external world is how we might see the Hero as symbolic of the ego, the force that helps us make our way through the world as a separate, strong, and grounded individual able to fend off the often-overwhelming obstacles in the way of survival.

The Heroic Spirit

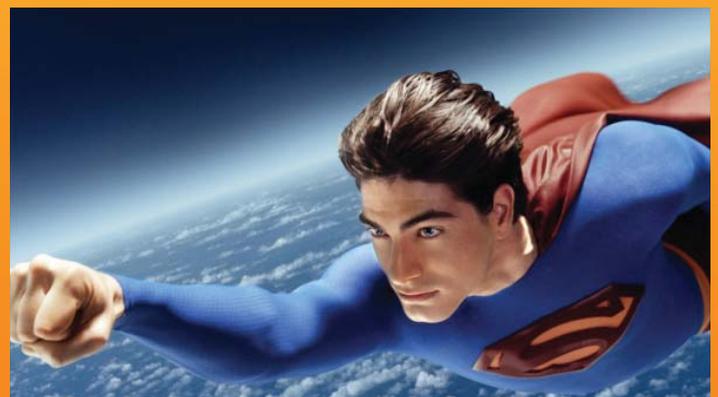
As the journey of the Hero archetype continued, it might be said that the Hero’s physical strength in the external world in the classical myths has shifted over time into a more interior strength in each individual’s quest to overcome fear and discover their power. This is how Hercules’ labors and, say, Dorothy’s journey to Oz (“The Wizard of Oz”) are entirely similar, although Hercules and Dorothy couldn’t be more different. Dorothy probably couldn’t do twelve push-ups, let alone accomplish the twelve labors that Hercules managed. This experience and strengthening of the interior emerged during the Christian era notably through the works of such religious mystics as Saint Teresa (“The Interior Castle”) and Saint John (“The Dark Night of the Soul”), among many others.

As “The Hero’s Journey” has been integrated in modern culture, and the Hero archetype has moved inward, the quest for physical strength (or ego strength) has been

replaced by a quest for strength of spirit. For example, this is how Jack in “Titanic”—by no means a literal heavy-weight—was able to save Rose “in every way that a person can be saved.” He saved her fiery spirit.

“Hercules and Dorothy couldn’t be more different. Dorothy probably couldn’t do twelve push-ups, let alone accomplish the twelve labors that Hercules managed.”

Whereas the ego is bound to the earth and keeps us earthbound, it is the nature of the spirit to exist outside of time and space, and not be bound by the literal world. In this fashion, the hero Superman crashed onto earth from a distant planet. Our modern Superheroes do not develop strength over time—they start off strong, as in the case of Superman or Wonder Woman, or they become instantly strong, as in the case of Peter Parker (Spiderman) or Bruce Banner (The Incredible Hulk). They are then able to add powers such as flying (symbolic of the soaring spirit), super-strength, super-sight, super-hearing, or super-speed. Their powers defy normal earth laws of physics, which is akin to the archetypal nature of the modern spiritual quest to transcend earth limits (see Caroline Myss’ book “Defy Gravity”). It’s symbolic as well of the modern emergence of clairvoyance, clairaudience, and other heightened intuitive senses that operate outside of time (i.e., you can know a lot about someone instantly, without them having to tell you, and without having to be in the same location).



It is in the nature of the Hero’s Journey for the Hero to eventually return home from his quest. Odysseus took twenty years to return home, while Dorothy never really had to leave home. Likewise, while Odysseus’ return was to a literal home, Superman’s quest began when his home world was destroyed. Without the literal home to return to, we can add another layer of symbolic meaning to the

Hero archetype: the return home is a return to home inside oneself, a return to the interior, a return to feeling at home in your being and the ability to be yourself.



The Heroic Soul: From Hercules to Hiccup

Yet another Hero appears to be emerging in our culture—perhaps a new 21st century Hero—in the form presented by Hiccup in the DreamWorks film “How to Train Your Dragon”. Hiccup is a Viking, living in a traditional Viking village with traditional Vikings who are massively muscled, heavily armored, and eager to slay as many dragons as they are able. Hiccup, however, is small, skinny, vulnerable, and smart. Hiccup is a nerd. His Hero’s Journey contains many obstacles he must overcome, as in any traditional Hero’s Journey, but added to this journey toward empowerment is the power of self-acceptance. Hiccup is unique among the Vikings and is mercilessly teased for not fitting the mold of the traditional Viking. His bravery is not of brawn, but of brains. His power is not in slaying the dragon, but in using his weapon to set it free. Where tradition sees the dragon as “enemy”, Hiccup discovers the dragon as “friend”. If we consider the dragon as a symbol of the imagination and of the soul, to befriend the soul takes a new kind of heroism. This kind of revolutionary Hero could be a glimpse of what’s ahead, what might emerge in the coming period: a Hero whose fight for acceptance of self makes the world safe for each individual to be his or her unique self, an integrated unity of ego, spirit and soul. ■

Fire: In Us and Around Us

Tricia Ells

When I learned that the first issue of the resurrected “Elements” was to be guided by the theme of “Fire,” I immediately thought of Hestia—that Goddess of hearth, centrality, community. Her energy is bound to come forth in the MN Jung Association’s “hearth” on the internet, in our new online journal devoted to the writing and sharing of innermost things. I had experienced Hestia’s presence personally many years ago, in a deeply affecting dream of my own. I looked forward to encountering and working with her again.

But here I was, in the middle of a Minnesota winter, the world outside my window buried in a deep, deep blanket of snow. The environment seemed relentlessly frozen. My house was warm—but the warmth came from hidden ducts carrying heat produced by an invisible furnace. I couldn’t sit in front of a fireplace, staring dreamily at flames; I have no fireplace. Not even a pot-bellied stove. I was finding it extremely difficult to get fired up. The creative flames simply refused to ignite.

A thought came to me: possibly it would help to get out my copy of the Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology and look up “fire” in the index. I did so, and was immediately transported into the powerful, entrancing world of Greek myth. In reading about Prometheus, that bringer of fire to mankind, I learned that he—as a Titan—raged against Zeus, the leader of the first-generation Olympians who had destroyed Prometheus’ race. He revenged himself by favoring mortals to the detriment of the Gods. I fell under the spell of this fascinating myth with its connections between the sky gods and men. I was equally fascinated with the mythology of Hephaestus. In Bolen’s “Gods in Everyman,” I read more of his connection to volcanoes, lava, and underground fire. These connections were both creative and destructive. At this point, I was thoroughly immersed in the fiery imagery of rebellion against autocracy, the gift of fire and communication with mankind, and the molten heat of creativity. I sensed that somehow the Hestia energy encompasses these other myths. I was definitely beginning to warm up to the task at hand.

Then it happened: In what seemed like an uncanny moment of synchronicity, the news of the Arab rebellion in Tunisia and Egypt made its way out and around the planet. As Time magazine put it a few days later, in lands that have been plundered and tyrannized, the Arab Revolution of 2011 has been smoldering for decades. “Resignation finally turned into rebellion.” This article goes on to say that the tipping point for this eruption

occurred in the tiny, hardscrabble Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, where a young vegetable seller named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire—after his cart had been abruptly confiscated and he had been publicly slapped across the face in broad daylight by a policewoman. “From one end of the Arab world to the other, all the more so in the tyrannies ruled by strongmen and despots (Libya, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Algeria), the Arab world was teeming with Mohamed Bouazizis.” (In a United Nations report of 2009, which was developed by Arab researchers, it becomes apparent why this revolution is so closely connected with the young. In the Arab world of 360 million people, the median age is 22, compared with a global average of 28. Close to 60% now live in urban areas. No fewer than 65 million Arabs live below the poverty line of \$2 a day. By 2020, 51 million new jobs will have to be created to accommodate the young.)

A powerful factor in this Arab revolution is that of dynastic succession, and the unconscious fear, on the part of the “autocratic father”, of being overthrown by a “son,” or—in modern times, the young in general. We in America have seen this dynamic erupt: who can forget the attempted suppression of the Vietnam war protests, or the Kent State killings where the National Guard turned on its own young? These dynamics bring to mind the myth linking Prometheus the Titan with Zeus, the autocratic leader of the Olympians. The whole Greek patriarchal theogeny consists of one tyrant after another being overthrown by a successor who, in turn, becomes yet another tyrant.

But for me the most startling aspect of the Arab rebellion is the instant communication that took place and is still taking place: the instant transmission of images from the sites of the uprisings to the eyes and ears of the rest of the world. The way I received them was through television and radio. But the amazing developments of modern technology, so quickly absorbed by today’s young, were probably the most important factor in this instant communication—the communication provided by Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Skype, etc. The young all over the planet were in communication with each other—and with the rest of us who are not so young. Even the Egyptian government’s attempts to block the internet came to naught; enterprising young people set up phone lines for others to use to make reports, which were then transferred to the internet. The sparks set off by the Self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi were transmitted by what seemed like an almost spontaneous combustion. Sitting transfixed in front of my T.V. set I felt a part of some huge whole—as if I were staring into the flames of a central hearth. I felt a joining with millions of people who were all watching the fire of rebellion

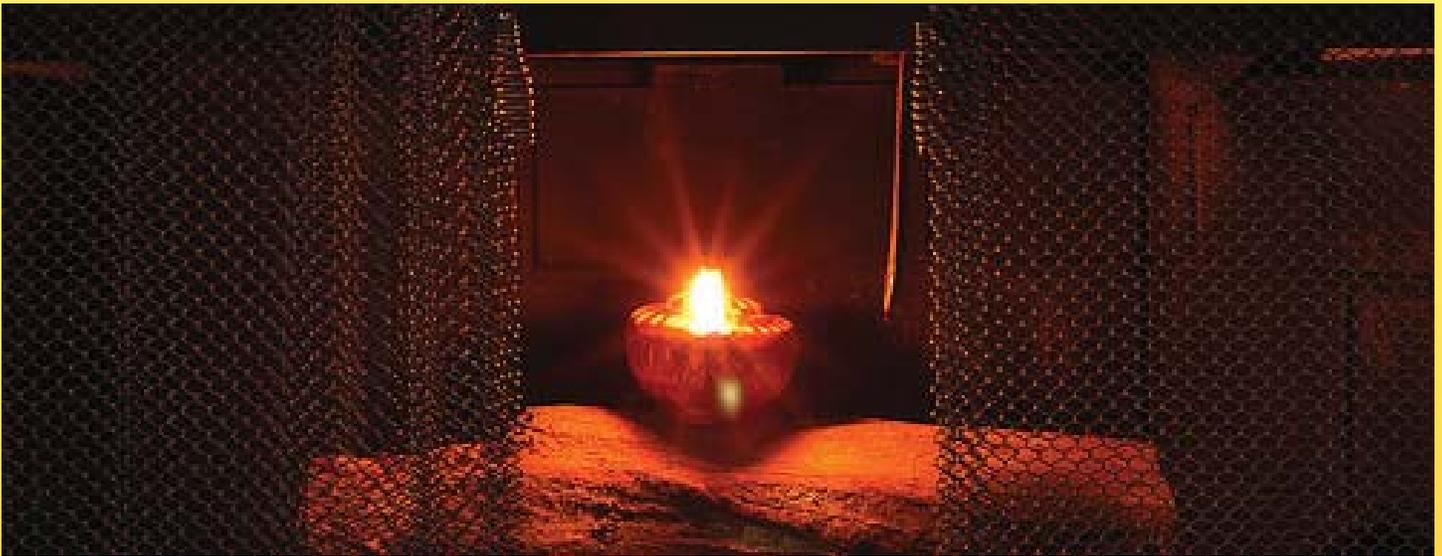
and desire for freedom springing into being. And it was at this point I came back to my quest for the essence of Hestia.

Was it possible that a twenty-first century person such as myself—sitting in front of my television screen and staring at the fiery rebellion roaring up in a distant part of the world—could be experiencing something similar to what the citizen of ancient Greece felt about Hestia’s fire? Is the television screen—or the computer screen, or the internet—a new manifestation of the ancient hearth? What did those ancient people feel when they sat in their circle that contained the dancing flames?

“I felt a part of some huge whole—as if I were staring into the flames of a central hearth. I felt a joining with millions of people who were all watching the fire of rebellion and desire for freedom springing into being.”

To the ancient Greek, fire was sacred. Hestia WAS the fire. In the Orphic Hymn 84, to Hestia, we find Hestia described as the one “who dwellest amidst great fire’s eternal flame...In thee, the Gods have fixed their dwelling place, strong, stable basis of the mortal race.” Although she came to be seen as the goddess of hearth and home, in both a sacred and earthly sense, I think this definition of her as living in great fire’s eternal flame gives her even more depth. She is of greatest importance to the psyche in the modern sense. She is a virgin goddess. Both Poseidon and Apollo desired to wed her, but she refused, instead swearing to her father, Zeus, that she would remain the keeper of the sacred flame of the gods. In the Homeric Hymn 5 to Aphrodite 18 we find: “Zeus the Father gave her [Hestia] a high honor instead of marriage, and she has her place in the midst of the house and has the richest portion. In all the temples of the gods she has a share of honor, and among all mortal men she is chief of the goddesses.” In Cicero’s De Natura Deorum 2.27 can be found the words: “Her power extends over altars and hearths, and therefore all prayers and all sacrifices end with this goddess, because she is the guardian of the innermost things.” This seems to me to show that the ancient Greeks had a conception of the fire of the Self that was very much like Jung’s own. Hestia is almost co-equal with Zeus; she abides in the central house of the gods and is the keeper of the eternal essence—the innermost fire (she is not entirely equal: this is, after all, a patri-archal theogeny!)

The sacred fire was never to be allowed to go out. If by



chance it did, the Greeks had certain specific ceremonies to re-establish it. The same principle holds sway today: the carrying of the torch to the Olympic games comes from this tradition.

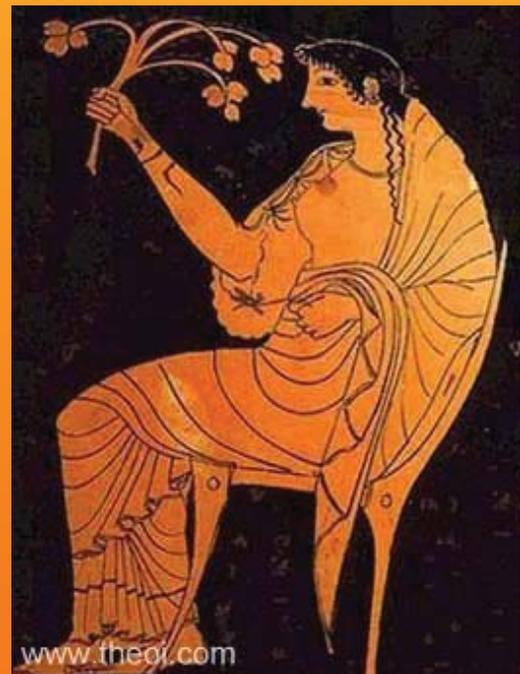
As the Greek myths evolved further, the meaning of Hestia becomes less remote and more related to human life. Fire becomes an indispensable factor in the development of the city. In Plato's *Laws*, he describes the founding of his ideal city: "He must divide off twelve portions of land...when he has first set apart a sacred glebe [soil, earth, cultivated land] for Hestia, Zeus and Athena, to which he shall give the name 'Akropolis' and circle it round with a ring-wall; starting from this he must divide up both the city itself and all the country into the twelve portions." Zeus receives central place as king of the gods, Athena as city-protector, and Hestia as goddess of the civic hearth." This suggests to me a kind of expansion of the meaning of Hestia, an opening up from her centrality in the individual soul to the shaping of the community of souls. She becomes the spirit of togetherness, communication, mutual purpose and wholeness.

If a new city came into being, fire was brought from the Akropolis to the central building of the metropolis, where a sacred hearth was established—a civic one. Another custom was for a new bride to bring the sacred fire from her family home to her new home, to establish a hearth of her own. In the private home, fire was the main source of light and warmth. On the battlefield, soldiers serving in the army paid homage to Hestia as they sat around the sacred fire. Hestia was present at every kind of gathering—sacred, civic, and communal.

As a final summation of Hestia's essence, I'd like to quote from Jean Shinoda Bolen's *"Gods in Everyman."* She writes: "As deities, Hermes and Hestia, Goddess of the

Hearth, were paired together as part of the structure of the home; a herm or stone pillar representing Hermes stood at the doorway of each house; within and at the center of the household was Hestia's hearth. These two deities, one as guardian and guide, the other as the source of warmth and illumination, symbolize aspects of the archetype of the Self." In this image, we have a picture of both interpsychic and intrapsychic connection.

I am hoping that our online Elements will become this kind of connection. Hopefully members of our Jungian community will gather around our website, sharing our thoughts and creative endeavors with each other. This would be the place and time for perhaps some fiery, rebellious thoughts—or warm, enlightening musings. This just might be the place for you to come in contact with the fire within yourself—and at the same time feel the warmth of being in connection with others. Hestia will welcome all of us. ■



With One Look: Norma Desmond and the Fire of Intuition

Shane Michael Nygaard

Of the four functions—intuition, sensation, thinking and feeling—it is the intuitive function which aligns most with the element of Fire. It is quick, it illuminates (revealing something, often an image), and eventually fades. As is true of each function, the intuitive function has its own unique set of distinguishing qualities. What are these qualities, and what might intuition look like if we gave it a face? And then a body? And then if we cast it in a starring role in a big hit Broadway musical? In answering these questions, let's step into the world of Andrew Lloyd Webber's lavish and spectacle-laden musical staging of the classic Hollywood film "Sunset Boulevard" and the image of its self-professed *greatest star of all*—Norma Desmond. In Lloyd Webber's "Sunset Boulevard," Norma Desmond has a dramatic presence, brought out through her vivid, often-aloof, and nostalgia-filled persona. In many ways, her presence, her image and her characterizations symbolize and form an image of the function of intuition. Let's take a look...



When Jung wrote about the intuitive function, he explained "The image fascinates the intuitive activity; it is arrested by it, and seeks to explore every detail of it. It holds fast to the vision, observing with the liveliest interest how the picture changes, unfolds, and finally fades." In "Sunset Boulevard," Norma Desmond's infamy rose through the medium of silent movies—a genre rich in imagery, where the visual world was of supreme importance. In Lloyd Webber's musical version, Norma's first big Act One showstopper beautifully captures the powerful quality of intuitive image fascination—her song is titled "With One Look." In the nostalgic song, Norma sings entirely of the many facets of *her own image* and its power when she appeared on the silent movie screen:

"With one look I can break your heart / With one look I play every part / I can make your sad heart sing / With one look you'll know all you need to know." Intuition, interestingly enough, functions remarkably like Norma Desmond's screen presence—where one brief image (an intuitive "hit") speaks volumes, and through the intuitive image we essentially know all we need to know, for the image is loaded with information. As James Hillman illustrates in "The Soul's Code," "This is the nature of an image, any image. It's all there at once. When you look at a face before you, at a scene out your window, or a painting on a wall, you see a whole gestalt. All the parts present themselves simultaneously." Interestingly enough, Norma's living room, the setting for the song, is filled with candles and self-portraits, all the parts she's played over the years presented in images reflecting her vast array of faces and characters from her career. It's all there at once.

***"With one look I can break your heart /
With one look I play every part / I can
make your sad heart sing / With one
look you'll know all you need to know"***

If we focus specifically on Norma's image, then, her stage presence during "With One Look" contains a wealth of visuals in and of itself that draws us into the world of intuition. Jung explains of the intuitive function, "If intuition is to function properly, sensation must, to a large extent, be suppressed," with sensation as the physical earth world, including our bodies and the ground we walk on. When we do in fact *look* at Norma, her head is covered by and her hair contained within a large turban. Her entire body is essentially hidden beneath an elaborate, exotic, flowing and draping gown. Dark colors abound in her gothic, otherworldly garb and her eyes—always the eyes—look about everywhere. We can barely see her feet as she flows and sways with the music, flashing look after look, singing of the power of her glance. In this performance, the character of Norma has almost no earthly sensation about her, no weight, as though she is a specter adrift on stage, flowing and floating around. Her body is hidden beneath the draping gown. Like Norma, intuition has no "weight" about it, no body and cannot be literally touched. She sings of how just one look on her face "*sets the screen aflame*" and "*ignites a blaze*." She's not singing of material reality, of intellectual brilliance or the physical world, but instead draws us into the untouchable nature of intuition. As she sings and moves, she has a flow about her, and her hidden feet further suggest a distinct lack of connection to the ground, another indicator she's not concerned with the world of concrete reality.

Looking further into Norma's image and intuition, in "With One Look" she sings "No words can tell the stories my eyes tell / Watch me when I frown / You can't write that down!" This suggests something of the relationship between intuition and the world of words and language. In her book "Awakening Intuition," Dr. Mona Lisa Schulz explains several general characteristics of intuition itself, one of which is its difficulty putting images into words. Norma apparently concurs with Dr. Schulz, taking it even a bit further: "Yes, with one look I put words to shame." And though putting words to shame is not exactly a difficulty putting images into words, they both nonetheless place the "word" as somehow secondary. Image first, then words. And while Norma's look puts words to shame, she wasn't entirely shameless, eventually seeking a writer, Joe Gillis, to help her put words to the wealth of images that arose out of her. Intuition alone struggles with the words.

Returning to Norma, another of her key songs in "Sunset Boulevard" is a nostalgic piece, "New Ways to Dream," in which she sits reviewing her old films, drifting back to the early days of silent movie discovery in Hollywood. According to Dr. Schulz, other characteristics of intuition include "confidence in the process of intuition, certainty in the truth of intuitive insights, it is non-analytic, non-rational, non-logical, [has a] gestalt nature of knowing, and a relationship to creativity." And in "New Ways to Dream," Norma sings of how she and her colleagues created something new for the world—they were pioneers, blazing a trail leading them into uncharted territories, the likes of which they never could have predicted. The non-rational and non-logical qualities of intuition function in a similar manner, appearing as a

form of guidance asking us to follow it, often unaware of where it may be taking us. And Norma's "New Ways to Dream" is also reflective of one of intuition's mediums—the dream. As Dr. Schultz explains, "Dreams are a primary source of intuition, a channel through which crucial guidance is broadcast and vital images televised to us about matters that are critical to our lives." Norma and the early days of Hollywood gave an entire culture "new ways to dream" (incidentally, not unlike the Titan Prometheus stealing intuitive fire from the Gods and gifting it to humanity), awakening within the collective a new sense of intuitive consciousness. Hollywood itself followed this path—image first, then words—beginning first with the images filling the screen in the silent movies, later overtaken by the "talkies" and soundtracks, with the logical tracks of sound leaving Norma and her powerful image bound behind chains of words and sentences.

But intuition alone has its limitations, of which Jung was familiar, describing the potential dangers of intuition, "Naturally, the intensification of intuition often results in an extraordinary aloofness of the individual from tangible reality." Such was how Norma was portrayed in "Sunset Boulevard," left adrift in her world of the old new ways to dream, and the blaze and flames of her image and "looks" from days gone by; out of touch and far removed from "reality." But an intuitive insight itself is not meant to last forever, rather is designed to come and go, appear and fade, always leaving room and, like Norma Desmond herself, leading to the next moment and next image waiting to be looked at. ■

O Sovereign Sun

Shane Michael Nygaard

O sovereign sun whose sceptered beams
Stand silently shining across the lands
With jeweled sleeves wrapped 'round your light-lit hands
Stretching 'cross all expanse of hills and streams
Your knowing light warms all through all extremes
The royal king enthroned in skies above
Embracing all from swan to doe to dove
In regal heat, the beat of songs and scenes

Each morning as you rise, your eyes awaken gold
And watch the world below let go of sleep
With glory riding high on mountains steep
Your lights unfold in sights nights only long to hold
Your kingdom grows, red roses rise tenfold
And carry beauty's honor dawning deep